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SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE: GUEBUZA'S 100-DAY VICTORY LAP

REF: A. MAPUTO 0184

[1B.](#) MAPUTO 0150

Classified By: Ambassador Helen La Lime for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[11.](#) (SBU) President Guebuza has spent the first 100 days in office traveling the length of the country, bolstering support for himself and the ruling party, Frelimo. In public addresses he has held firm to the themes of his campaign promise to alleviate poverty, combat corruption and eliminate bureaucratic inefficiency. Back in Maputo some government ministries are functioning smoothly under new management, while others are still finding their way. In the midst of his domestic travels, Guebuza has found the time and energy for visits in the region and a short trip to Europe. He presents the image of one who is extremely busy, decisive and sure of himself. The contours of Guebuza's presidency are still forming, however. We ought to look for ways to offer guidance to the new government. End Summary.

From the Rovuma River to Maputo

[12.](#) (U) Guebuza's first 100 days in office have been to a large extent spent outside the capital, criss-crossing the country. He has paid special attention to rural populations in the center and north who have yet to enjoy the benefits of Mozambique's post-conflict development. On his visits he has stressed his government's overriding concern with economic development, particularly alleviating poverty. This goal is reflected in the newest five-year plan (designed under the Chissano administration), through which two-thirds of the GRM's USD 2 billion budget is slated for poverty reduction initiatives. His travels remind many of Samora Machel in the early years after independence, trying to encourage a sense of national pride and unity among the people.

[13.](#) (U) Provincial governors have been instructed to travel outside their respective capitals so they better understand their constituents. Guebuza's tactic of bringing into his cabinet six former provincial governors has served to reinforce the message that he has his administration care about people in the provinces. All of his trips and activities, from the Rovuma river up north to Maputo in the far south, have received lavish press coverage, yet another throw back to the Machel era.

Consolidating Power

[14.](#) (U) During his visits Guebuza has sought to rebuild support for the ruling Frelimo party. Voters were apathetic in the 2004 elections -- turnout was surprisingly low, roughly 45 percent, well below the 74 percent in the 1999 elections -- and Guebuza garnered just over 2 million votes compared to 2.4 million for Chissano in 1999. In stop after stop, he has made the party a central theme, stressing that Frelimo is intent on solving the problems of the people.

[15.](#) (SBU) More challenging for Guebuza have been the behind-the-scenes efforts to strengthen his hold within the heart of the party. On March 4, former president Joaquim Chissano reluctantly surrendered his position as Frelimo party president to Guebuza. According to some observers, Chissano stepped down only after several long and heated discussions within Frelimo's inner circle. Retaining his post as Frelimo Secretary General, Guebuza would appear now to have full control over the party, but we continue to hear of divisions within Frelimo between Guebuza and Chissano camps.

Guebuza Beats the Corruption Drum

[16.](#) (U) Guebuza has continued where he left off on the campaign trail, pledging that his administration is serious in its fight against corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and red tape. From secondary school openings to the May Day rally, this promise is a centerpiece of every public address Guebuza has made since his February 2 inauguration. Some in his cabinet have already taken the message to heart. The Minister of Education has shown up unannounced in remote corners of his ministry to see who were at their desks, the Minister of Health has conducted numerous surprise inspections of hospitals and spoken openly about poor

conditions in the sector, and the Minister of Agriculture has tightened up regulations on the use of official vehicles.

¶17. (SBU) Guebuza's message to date has focused mainly on inefficiency and petty corruption at low and mid-level rungs of the bureaucracy. This has alienated some mid-level bureaucrats, who have long benefited from the spoils their state positions provide, but the message appears to be quite popular overall. Most recently even several former ministers have become targets of corruption investigations (septel).

Some Anxious, Others Forging Ahead

¶18. (C) In contrast to his whirlwind spin through the provinces, activity in the capital has been more mixed. In the Ministry of Agriculture, which will play a key role in the Guebuza plans for rural development, the new directives on vehicle and cell phone usage have caused noticeable grumbling and dismay. USAID contacts report confusion and low morale there. The Health Minister's combative style (he is famous for criticizing poor performers in front of others) has bred considerable resentment. The rearranging of half a dozen ministries after Guebuza took over has not helped matters. The IMF representative told us several weeks ago that he is certain the national budget director has no idea to which ministry he belongs, Finance or Planning.

¶19. (C) In contrast, though, some other ministries are showing real promise. The Minister of Industry and Commerce has jumped at the opportunity to move ahead toward a Trade Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the U.S. We are hopeful a TIFA can be signed in Washington in mid-June, quite quickly since the U.S.-Mozambique Bilateral Investment Treaty only came into force in March. The Energy Minister has impressed attendees at the Ninth African Conference on Oil and Gas, currently underway in Maputo with his knowledge and experience. In the Foreign Ministry, the new director of the Americas and European Directorate, former Ambassador to the UN Carlos Dos Santos, has been readily accessible to the Ambassador on a number of issues in the past weeks and has helped overcome bottlenecks in other ministries. Minister of Defense Dai, currently visiting China, has been active in advancing key USG initiatives within the military, including ACOTA and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Vision?

¶10. (C) According to the IMF representative, senior officials can repeat Guebuza's campaign speeches about fighting poverty and eliminating corruption, but when pressed for details have very little to offer. In his view, the Guebuza administration has no clear vision of the way forward.
(Comment: It may be a sign that Guebuza, for the time being, is focused on strengthening his grip on power instead of using it, demanding discipline over initiative. It may be because many of his senior advisors and ministers have been chosen for their loyalty, not for their technical expertise (ref A). The Foreign Minister, for instance, has a background in the Frelimo party and social work but none in diplomacy. End Comment.) The IMF rep hastens to add, though, that technically competent deputies remain in all the ministries.

Guebuza on the International Scene

¶11. (SBU) Contrary to fears that Guebuza would break from Chissano-era policy and shun the international community to promote Mozambicanization of the economy (ref B), Guebuza has continued along Chissano's path. In an effort to strengthen relations with Mozambique's neighbors and further encourage foreign investment, since his February inauguration Guebuza has traveled extensively in the region, including visits to Angola, Zimbabwe, Malawi among others. Guebuza's May visit to South Africa yielded a long-awaited visa waiver program that has already increased trans-border commerce, while similar visa waivers were explored in talks in Swaziland and Botswana. Guebuza's international overtures extend beyond the region. Guebuza attended the Pope's funeral in April, followed by a quick trip to Brussels. In May, he sent his Foreign Minister to Havana to reinforce Mozambique's ties with Cuba. He is clearly looking forward to his upcoming meeting with the President and his follow-on participation at the Corporate Council on Africa Business Summit in Baltimore later this month.

Quiet on the HIV/AIDS Front

¶12. (SBU) Apart from a few public statements, Guebuza has said little about HIV/AIDS. He has placed capable individuals at the helm of key government institutions, such as the Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Council. However, with a prevalence rate edging above 15 percent, the disease is looming ever greater as a scourge for the people and the economy, and his relative silence is surprising. Even with large amounts of resources flowing into the country for prevention and treatment, Guebuza will have to play much

more of a leadership role if his country is to make meaningful gains battling the disease.

Comment

¶13. (C) It is still too early to tell where Guebuza's regime is headed. The emphasis so far has been on shoring up support from the populace below and ensuring loyalty at the top. He is known to be decisive, even impulsive, yet this does not mean that Guebuza does not listen. Everyone, it seems, who meets with him is struck by his intelligence. The months ahead will be a testing time for the new Guebuza administration, as the honeymoon phase of his term wanes. We need to watch some of the laggards, especially the weak judicial and the agricultural sectors, to see whether and how Guebuza will push reform. As the situation warrants, we ought to look for ways to offer guidance and encouragement.

La Lime